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ABSTRACT

Chapter 740 of the Public Acts of 1988 mandated that student needs assessments are to be conducted annually. Needs assessment may be defined as a process for idenitfying the gaps between educational goals (outcomes) established for students and students' actual performance. Whether goals and objectives are explicit or implicit, they play a critical role in the needs assessment process. Data used to identify need gaps can be generated by grades, test scores, student records, surveys, demographic studies, financial records, and dropout information. When data have been collected, synthesized, and portrayed, discrepancies between actual and desired performance can be determined. The information base needs to be broad, reliable, revealing, and pertinent. Needs assessments focus on priorities derived from student needs, not on "wish list" activities employed to address priorities. The needs assessment process described in this guide involves the following steps: (1) preparing for the needs assessment by developing a comprehensive plan; (2) collecting the data from as many sources as feasible; (3) summarizing and analyzing the data so that high priority student needs are readily identified; and (4) preparing a report that accurately describes the needs assessment process. Five appendices contain information on survey development, data sources, data analysis, report components, and a progress chart. Also included is an annotated bibliography of 22 references. (MLH)

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NEEDS ASSESSMENT GUIDE

Second Edition

Dr. Charles E. Smith, Commissioner of Education
Tennessee Department of Education

February 1990

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Dr. Charles E. Smith, Commissioner of Education
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This is the second edition of the Needs Assessment Guide. The first edition was implemented during the 1989-90 school year by Tennessee school systems. As a result of experience and feedback from school personnel, the previous guide was expanded and revised.

This guide was developed by the Career Ladder Project Team.

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BACKGROUND

During the 1988 legislative session several important changes were made in the Career Ladder Program. The changes were mandated by Chapter 740 of the Public Acts of 1988. One of the important provisions of the act was that:

> local education agencies shall conduct annual needs assessments to determine the focus of their extended contract activities. The priority for such activities shall be student needs. Committees of local educators must conduct the assessments or certify the needs, as determined by local boards under guidelines promulgated by the Commissioner of Education.

The primary intent of the legislation was to focus Extended Contract Programs on high priority student needs. These needs were to be identified by local schools so that the resources expended would have the most beneficial impact.

During the 1989-90 school year, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) conducted the required needs assessments in compliance with guidelines provided by the State Department of Education (SDE). The previous version of this Needs Assessment Guide was provided as a supplement to the guidelines. As a result of experience and feedback from school personnel, the original guide was revised and expanded. This document is based on the first guide and includes the revisions and additions deemed necessary by the project team.

Another program initiated by the State Department of Education during the 1989-90 school year was the Alternative Incentive Program. This program focuses on high priority student, school, and/or system needs. More information about this program can be obtained from the Career Ladder Division of the SDE. Alternative Incentive Proposals must also be developed based on a local needs assessment. These proposals are reviewed in the same manner as Extended Contract Proposals. The needs assessment process described in this guide provides helpful information for developing both Extended Contract and Alternative Incentive Proposals.

OVERVIEW

There has been a considerable amount of confusion about what constitutes a bona fide needs assessment. Some of the confusion is a result of the various definitions of needs assessment. The guidelines presented in this document are based on the premise that a needs assessment is a process for identifying the gaps between the educational goals (outcomes) schools have established for students and students' actual performance. These gaps can then be used to determine student needs. Needs can be identified by comparing goals, objectives, and expectations of the school system with a variety of data that depict current performance. Goals of a system may be *explicit,* developed systematically and stated formally in documents such as school reports and similar educational materials, or they may be *implicit,* inferred from the day-to-day operations of the schools. Whether goals and objectives are explicit or implicit, they play a critical role in the needs assessment process.

Data to be used in the identification of need gaps can be generated by grades, test scores, student records, surveys, demographic studies, financial records, drop out information, etc. When data have been collected, synthesized, and portrayed, it is possible to determine the discrepancies or gaps between actual and desired performance. A comprehensive needs assessment should result in an information base that is broad, reliable, revealing, and pertinent, thus enabling schools to identify high priority student needs. Needs identified in this manner will be the basis for instructional programs, including Extended Contract and Alternative Incentive Proposals, that are worthwhile and feasible, and that will have a beneficial impact.

It should be kept in mind that a "need" is defined as a gap between current performance and desired results. Needs assessments focus on priorities derived from student needs, not on activities that are employed to address priorities. For example, instead of deciding to provide parenting workshops, the need for more parental involvement must first be documented through the needs assessment process. Only after a need has been verified should possible programs or

activities to address the problem be discussed. Why? Before effective methods for solving problems can be developed, as much as possible must be known about the problems themselves. The emphasis, then, is on meeting high priority needs and not on developing a "wish list" of activities that is not generated from student needs.

The needs assessment process described in this guide involves the following steps:

1. preparing for the needs assessment,
2. collecting the data,
3. summarizing and analyzing the data, and
4. reporting the results.

The purpose of this guide is to take the reader through the needs assessment process step by step. A hypothetical school system, Volunteer School System, has been used to provide an ongoing scenario for each step of the process. For the sake of clarity, each phase of the scenario has been set apart from the text in boxes throughout the guide.

All needs assessments may not be conducted in exactly the same manner, but all assessments should follow the general guidelines presented in this document. The guidelines give overall direction to the activities that will be necessary for carrying out needs assessments. Activities may vary from system to system depending on the purpose being served and the resources available for conducting a needs assessment. As a minimum, however, all of the components presented in this guide should be addressed by the needs assessment process. It is also realized that conducting a needs assessment within this framework may be a relatively new process for many school systems. Therefore, the results of first attempts may not be as successful as they will be in future years. In addition, information generated for each year's study will become valuable data for future needs assessments.

In addition to the presentation of the guidelines and description of the steps to be followed in the needs assessment process, the guide contains an annotated bibliography of selected references on conducting needs assessments. Included in the appendixes is supplementary material that can help clarify the entire needs assessment process.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT PREPARATION

Guideline 1: A comprehensive plan should be developed to give direction to all needs assessment activities.

The preparation phase lays the foundation for all that follows. Careful planning may be the most important part of the entire needs assessment process. The planning process should begin with the identification of a coordinator and the appointment of a committee that will assure that the needs assessment has been conducted within the prescribed guidelines. The coordinator, the committee, and any other personnel with ultimate responsibility for the proposal development should develop an understanding about the rationale for the needs assessment, the information or data sources needed, how the data will be collected and analyzed, allocation of resources necessary to carry out the needs assessment, and the framework for presenting the results.

Coordinator Selection

This person may already be responsible for other assessment activities. If no one is currently assigned this task, a person who has planning skills and a background and/or interest in evaluation and research should be identified. The coordinator could be someone from the administrative staff or a teacher who has the interest and ability to develop the skills and competencies needed. If a teacher is appointed to this position, release time would need to be provided. The person appointed should have the leadership skills necessary to work well with others, have good planning and management skills, and have the ability to communicate effectively.

Coordinator Selection

A K-12 supervisor, Margaret Jones, was appointed by the superintendent to coordinate the needs assessment for Volunteer School System. Due to her full schedule and workload demands, she recommended the appointment of an elementary teacher, Mike McLaughlin, to serve as her assistant. Mike has a broad subject area background and has taken graduate courses in curriculum and instruction as well as evaluation. He will be given release time (in the form of substitute days) to serve in this capacity.

Committee Selection

According to the legislative mandate,

> each local education agency shall have an extended contract committee consisting of teachers, including one (1) Career Level III or II teacher where possible, and administrators, which, as determined by the local board of education, shall conduct or assist in the needs assessment and advise on or certify to the need for specific programs served through extended contracts.

Each committee may function differently, but each will be involved in the needs assessment process and in the development of proposals.

Committee Selection

In addition to Margaret Jones, the K-12 supervisor who is coordinating the needs assessment, and Mike McLaughlin, the teacher who is assisting in the needs assessment, the superintendent appointed the following members to serve on the committee:

1. Sylvia Wright, the chair of the high school English Department and a Career Level III teacher;
2. Harrison Smith, the local education association president who is a middle school science teacher;

3. Sandy Barnett, a Career Level II reading resource teacher;
4. Sara Hutchins, the high school principal;
5. Arnold Lippencott, the junior high school principal;
6. Charles Graham, an elementary principal;
7. Diane Foster, a high school mathematics teacher;
8. Joe Henderson, the high school guidance counselor; and
9. Mary Swartz, parent.

Roles and Responsibilities

The coordinator is expected to be responsible for developing the needs assessment design in consultation with the needs assessment committee. Once the design is agreed upon, the coordinator is responsible for conducting or supervising all of the steps included in the design. The committee is to be kept informed of the progress of the needs assessment and to act in an advisory capacity. Members of the committee may also take the responsibility for assisting the coordinator in carrying out any of the needs assessment activities. When the needs assessment has been completed, the committee will assure that the process has been conducted according to the guidelines and that the identified needs are the basis for program proposals.

Roles and Responsibilities

Margaret Jones, the K-12 supervisor who is coordinating the needs assessment, will provide the leadership for the process and manage the resources necessary to carry out the assessment. She will work with Mike McLaughlin, the assistant coordinator, in developing the needs assessment design, in overseeing all steps of design implementation, and in keeping the committee informed and advised throughout the process.

Mike McLaughlin, the assistant coordinator, will help in such activities as identifying data sources, collecting information, identifying or locating computer software for information storage and retrieval, developing any needed

instrumentation, analyzing data, portraying data, and collaborating with the coordinator to develop programs to meet identified needs.

The committee will serve in an advisory capacity throughout the process. It will be the responsibility of the committee to certify that the needs assessment has been carried out according to the design and that both the design and the procedures comply with State Department of Education guidelines. The committee will also help collect and analyze data. Each committee member will be responsible for the collection of data pertaining to a specified area (test scores, attendance data, etc.) and for preparing both a written and oral summary for the rest of the committee members.

Needs Assessment Rationale

A carefully developed rationale statement should provide direction for needs assessment activities. Most school systems have a number of educational concerns that are known or have been previously identified (perhaps through prior needs assessments). It is important to establish a focus for assessing student needs before determining what data will be collected. By answering several important questions, the focus for the assessment can be established. Examples of such questions are enumerated below.

1. What are the current important local educational concerns?
2. To what extent are local concerns consistent with state, regional, and national concerns?
3. To what extent are the local concerns unique?
4. What local educational programs currently exist that are closely related to the concerns that have been expressed?
5. What local demographic characteristics contribute to the expressed concerns?

The information generated by answering these questions can be the basis for developing the overall rationale for the needs assessment study. The needs assessment coordinator(s) and

the committee will use the rationale as a basis for the needs assessment design.

Needs Assessment Rationale

Margaret and Mike held several informal meetings with administrators, colleagues, parents, and students throughout the system regarding major areas of concern. From these meetings, they generated ideas which guided the development of a rationale statement. They shared their tentative rationale statement with the committee and invited suggestions and recommendations. Incorporating the input of the committee, the following rationale statement was prepared:

Volunteer School System is located in the upper east part of Tennessee approximately 95 miles from a large metropolitan area. The socio-economic level of most families is low due to the lack of industry in the area. Primarily it is a farming community.

Volunteer School System is a very diverse school system supporting nearly 5,000 students. It covers schools in several small cities as well as rural locations. There is a wide range of school configurations and student enrollment patterns. There are seven elementary, two middle, one junior high, one high school, and one vocational school in the system. The elementary schools, in general, have student populations of between 100 and 325. Middle and junior high schools range from 250 to 800 students. The high school has a student population of approximately 1,600. The vocational school enrollment is approximately 250.

Local support for the school system is minimal. Adult illiteracy rates throughout the community are high and parental educational levels are very low. Active parental involvement in the schools, even at the elementary level, is far lower than in nearby urban school systems. A number of parents openly express the opinion that school beyond the 8th grade is unnecessary. Local referendums to provide financial support for the schools have failed for the last five years.

Volunteer School System has traditionally been plagued by high dropout rates, poor student attendance beyond the primary grades, and community apathy. Currently the large number of high school students failing English, mathematics, and social studies, particularly in the ninth grade, is a major concern. Teachers complain that students are coming to class unprepared, are discipline problems, and are not performing up to established standards and expectations. Teachers also feel a

lack of parental support. Parents complain that students are apathetic, are reluctant to do homework, and are making poor grades. Students complain about a lack of parent and teacher understanding as well as the availability of "interesting" classes.

These issues are consistent with national concerns regarding at-risk students, low student test scores, student apathy, and poor student academic performance. The problems facing Volunteer School System are similar to those being faced by other school systems throughout the region.

Needs Assessment Design

A design consists of the major activities, responsibilities, and resources needed to achieve the purposes of the needs assessment. Resources needed, target dates, and persons responsible for completing all activities should be designated in the design. Procedures should be established for implementing each of the following activities:

1. collecting the data;
2. summarizing the data and determining discrepancies and priorities; and
3. reporting the results of the assessment.

The general approaches that can be used for each of these activities are discussed in the remaining sections of the guide.

Needs Assessment Design

It was decided that the coordinator, Margaret Jones, and assistant coordinator, Mike McLaughlin, would be responsible for identifying data sources, determining persons and procedures for collecting the data, deciding on procedures for analysis, and using the results to develop program proposals. They identified activities, assigned responsibilities, and established a timeline. After completing the project guide, the coordinators presented the design to the committee for review and

consultation.

PROJECT GUIDE

Project Statement: To identify and prioritize the needs of students in Volunteer School System by focusing on needs related to academic performance and opportunities, school attendance, at-risk students, and community support.

Major Activities:	Finish Date	Responsibility
Orientation & Rationale Dev.	April 14	Jones and Committee
Identify Data Sources	April 15	Committee Members
Collect Data	May 1	Committee Members
Identify Analysis Procedures	May 10	Jones, McLaughlin
Analyze Data	June 1	Committee & Others
Prepare Report	July 15	Jones, McLaughlin

For each activity identified on the Project Guide, Mike developed an "Activity Planning Sheet." Each sheet listed the major tasks required to complete each activity, along with who would complete the tasks and when. An activity description was also included.

ACTIVITY PLANNING SHEET

Activity Description: Analyze needs assessment information.

Major Tasks	Finish Date	Responsibility
Step One Analysis - Summarize Data	May 10	Identified Comm Mbrs
Portray Data	May 10	" " "
Present to Committee	May 21	" " "
Step Two Analysis - Determine Discrepancies	May 21	Committee
Step Three Analysis - Prioritize Student Needs	June 1	Committee& Others

DATA COLLECTION

Guideline 2: Information should be collected or generated from as many potential data sources as feasible.

The needs assessment design should include data sources that can be used to document high priority educational concerns. Information to be collected should be derived from both objective and subjective data sources which focus on, but are not limited to, the expressed concerns. While completing data collection tasks, it is important to make every attempt to collect data that are reliable and valid so that the results can be used to develop meaningful improvement plans. Data should be current and longitudinal data should be included. The data should be adequate in quantity, depth, and range, and all data sources should be carefully identified. Appropriate documentation of student needs should be based on data from multiple sources rather than placing heavy reliance on one or two sources.

The data collection task may focus more on compiling the available information from various sources within the system than on generating new information. Depending on the quality and quantity of existing data and the time available, it may be desirable to develop instruments which will generate additional data. (See Appendix A for suggestions regarding the development of questionnaires and interviews.)

Data sources are divided into two categories. *Readily accessible* data sources are those which should be available to all systems and *additional* data sources are those which would be valuable, supplementary sources of information. (The following sections describe possible data sources for both readily accessible and additional data sources. In addition, see Appendix B for examples of data sources.)

Readily Accessible Data Sources

Numerous sources of information can be quickly and easily identified within school systems. School records provide both objective and subjective data about student performance.

The data may include a summary of enrollment figures, grades, test scores, student profiles, or referrals for special assistance. Records concerning student attendance, transfers, and dropouts may also provide needed information. School records about parent employment and the number of free or reduced lunches can also yield important information that may be related to local educational concerns. Financial records that include the amount spent per student and the amount spent for supplies, materials, and equipment may be used to document resource needs. Evaluations of current or previous extended contract activities may provide information about the effectiveness of specific activities in meeting student needs identified through previous needs assessments.

Standardized test scores can provide readily available data about student performance in relation to other groups of students across the country. It is important to remember that data from these tests do not always address specific local problems, but instead portray how well students are performing against established norms. Some schools use instructional materials that include criterion referenced tests. These tests are designed to provide reliable information about how well students are achieving predetermined objectives. Once again, these tests may not address specific local problems. They will, however, provide helpful information about student achievement.

Additional Data Sources

Recent school evaluation reports, including those done for accreditation, may also contain important information about school and student needs. Follow-up studies conducted by the school system can yield additional information about former students that would be helpful in documenting needs.

Other data sources can help target local expectations, aspirations, and help to identify inequities or differences in priorities among schools within the same system. Surveys conducted by local schools, informal feedback from parents and community members, and interviews with representative members of the community can document perceptions about high priority needs. A number of school systems hold public hearings or forums that focus on the

needs of the schools. Information from these activities can help to establish areas that should be examined during the needs assessment process.

Local concerns must also be viewed in terms of regional, state, and national educational expectations. Opinions about educational problems expressed by leaders outside the local community should be considered within the context of the local assessment program. It is possible that the needs of the community and society as a whole should be given equal consideration with those concerns expressed at the local level. Information sources could be state reports (including the Governor's initiatives), national reports, research studies, articles found in professional literature, and articles written for newspapers and news magazines. This information could be used to expand and enrich the data base.

Several questions which can guide data collection are:

1. How can the concerns identified in the rationale be documented?
2. What data are readily available at central office and/or at individual schools?
3. What additional data could be generated given time and resources?
4. What is the best procedure for obtaining the data (i.e., responsibility, target dates, time span)?

Data Collection

The needs assessment coordinators and the committee identified potential data sources related to the concerns stated in the rationale. Potential sources included the following:

- attendance figures (system-wide, by school, previous three years)
- grade distribution
- retention rates
- dropout rates
- test scores
  - Stanford Achievement Test

- •• ACT/SAT
- •• basic skills
- •• proficiency
- •• teacher assessments

- discipline referrals
- SACS report
- parent interviews
- teacher interviews
- student survey
- free/reduced lunch report
- System goal statements
- evaluations of last year's extended contract activities
- follow-up study of graduates
- Commissioner's report card
- demographic report
- professional research and literature

Mike and Margaret began gathering readily available, system-wide information. The principals on the committee assumed responsibility for collecting the same information for individual schools. Information was collected on grade distributions and failure rates in all subject areas (in the junior/middle/high schools) and in all grade levels (in the elementary schools). To address attendance and dropout concerns, they obtained system wide attendance figures from central office and from individual schools. They asked Joe, the high school guidance counselor, for assistance in portraying dropout rates for the previous five years. Information was also collected from free/reduced lunch reports and existing goal statements. Margaret collected evaluation information about the impact of the previous year's extended contract activities.

To provide a more complete assessment of student performance, teacher committee members met with central office guidance and testing personnel to gather standardized test score results (Basic Skills and achievement tests). They also interviewed teachers in each subject area/grade level for their perceptions of students' performance on their teacher made and departmental criterion referenced tests and any additional concerns.

In order to have as complete a picture of the high school program as possible, Mike met with the principal, Sara Hutchins. She reviewed the school's

SACS Accreditation Report with Mike and gave him a copy to add to the information he had already collected. During their conversation, she shared her concerns regarding student performance, discipline, and apathy. She also suggested that at some point in the needs assessment process a small group of parents as well as the principals from the elementary, middle/junior, and high schools be interviewed.

Joe collected follow-up information. He spoke with local employers to determine what skills they felt were necessary for students to enter the workforce. He also collected the following information from all area colleges: the number of students attending from Volunteer School System, their major areas of study, and the number enrolled in developmental classes.

The interviews with the principals, and an evaluation of the information collected to this point, caused Margaret and Mike to identify several additional data sources that would be desirable. These sources included student information about the use of after school time, particularly student employment and extra curricular participation; follow up interviews with dropouts; and pertinent information from community forums. Joe felt that it would be helpful to incorporate student ideas and to develop a descriptive profile of dropouts in Volunteer School System. He had been unable to determine an accurate figure for the number of dropouts for the previous five years, but the existing information indicated that the figures may have exceeded the state average. Joe felt that a profile of the typical dropout in Volunteer School System would provide valuable information for determining and meeting the needs of at-risk students. He agreed to assume that responsibility to develop a profile.

At this point in the process, the coordinators and committee members reviewed their specific data source assignments. They agreed to collect the information, summarize the data into findings, and turn in the information to Margaret a week before the next scheduled committee meeting. This would give Margaret and Mike an opportunity to look over the information gathered and determine if additional data would be needed.

Margaret completed the data source section on the Needs Assessment Report. The list of data sources included not only the sources identified originally by the committee, but also the sources which were added during the process of collecting data (e.g., principal interviews and dropout profile).

DATA SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

Guideline 3: The data analysis process should result in a clear identification of high priority student needs.

The analysis process should help clarify gaps that exist between local performance and expectations held by teachers, administrators, and community members. Analysis activities should also help local educators compare the current status of their program outcomes with regional, state, and national norms. The goal of the analysis process is to bring meaning to the information collected and to do so in an organized way. The end result of analysis is to identify high priority student needs.

Procedures for data analysis should have been developed during the preparation stage for the needs assessment before the information was collected. The procedure involves three major steps. The first step is to summarize the data. This process ensures that the data collected are adequate and that the data are properly synthesized and presented. Once this has been completed, it is possible to identify discrepancies that are the basis for student needs. After the needs have been identified from the discrepancies, they should be prioritized.

Step 1 Data Summary

Before summarizing the data, it is necessary to ensure that the data collected are adequate. Several questions that can guide this activity are:

1. Are the data accurate, reliable, and valid?
2. Will the data that have been collected be adequate to achieve the purposes (i.e., adequate range, depth, and use of longitudinal data)?
3. Are there any additional data available that can strengthen the study? If so, how could they be obtained?
4. Have any data been collected that are not needed?

Summary and Analysis

Step 1 Data Summary

After an initial review of the data and findings, Margaret and Mike determined that the information collected provided an adequate, system-wide picture of current

student performance. The information collected was determined to be accurate and several sources provided data for the previous five years. The coordinators attempted to determine if additional information could strengthen the data base.

Margaret and Mike were aware of student complaints about being bored in classes and the significant number of students who performed well above the state average on test scores. A decision was made to examine current course offerings and enrollment figures and to determine through interviews, teacher perceptions about available and desired enrichment opportunities. Margaret assumed responsibility for the interviews and agreed to have the information summarized by the meeting date.

The data should then be synthesized, organized, and clearly portrayed so that the information can be easily understood. (See Appendix C for examples of data presentation.) Synthesis should begin by examining each data source and composing summary statements or findings that reflect the current state (i.e., of test scores, retention rates, grades, etc.). Graphs, charts, and other formats to visually portray the information are helpful in summarizing data. Examples of questions that can guide this activity are:

1. Have findings been derived from <u>each</u> of the data sources?
2. Have all relevant findings from each source been included in the summary?
3. Have charts and graphs been developed to enhance the presentation of data findings?
4. Could data from several sources be correlated (compared) to provide a more complete analysis?
5. Does the summary accurately present the total picture of current student performance?

<u>Data Summary (Continued)</u>

At the committee meeting, each member presented the data he/she had collected and summarized. Based on the rationale and an examination of the data, the

committee decided to organize the data summary into the following categories:

Student Academic Performance

Student Academic Opportunities

At Risk Students

Parental Support and Involvement

The committee then began to compile the data summary for the Needs Assessment Report.

[In an effort to keep the scenario clear and concise, the data summary in this report represents only a partial listing of the findings.]

(Partial) Findings related to Student Academic Performance:

1. Retention figures showed failure rates increased significantly beginning with 4th grade and remained at approximately the same rate through the middle school grades.
2. Retention figures indicated that failure rates increased again as students entered high school.
3. Grade distribution showed failure rates at the high school level were consistently higher in English, mathematics, and social studies.
4. Test scores revealed a high percentage (40%) of students in grades 4 and 5 scoring below state and national average in reading and mathematics.
5. Teacher assessments showed a significant number of students reading below grade level in grades 3, 4, and 5.

(Partial) Findings for Student Academic Opportunities:

1. Enrollment figures showed that placement in transition classes for K-1 have increased during each of the last five years. Last year's needs assessment led to the development of a middle school transition class with 20% of the eighth graders enrolled.
2. Demographic information depicted Volunteer School System as a rural county located 95 miles from a large metropolitan area. Few cultural opportunities exist locally.
3. In the latest SACS report, it was noted that few opportunities for enrichment exist for students at any level.
4. The student survey indicated strong interest in opportunities not currently available. These were: computer literacy, science and mathematics challenge courses, art, and test taking skills.
5. Follow-up studies of graduates showed that many graduates who go on to college

have to enroll in developmental courses. Graduates felt they lacked cultural/esthetic experiences. Of the graduates who did not go on to college, many reported the need for help in preparing for the ACT/SAT tests in order to gain admission to college and the need for vocational counseling and training.

6. Evaluations of previous extended contract activities demonstrated that transition classes were successful in terms of reduced retentions, increased academic success, and increased attendance.

(Partial) Findings for At Risk Students:

1. Retention figures showed failure rates at the high school level are higher for freshmen (30%) and decrease during the junior (12%) and senior (4%) years.

2. From interviews, factors thought by guidance counselors, principals, teachers, and parents to be contributing to student discipline problems and/or poor academic performance included lack of student preparation and attention to school work, lack of parental support, conflicts between teachers and students, assignments perceived as too difficult or irrelevant to student lives, student interpersonal relationships, and excessive demands on students.

3. The dropout profile described the typical dropout as a student who:

- left school during the freshman or sophomore year,
- failed two or more courses the semester prior to dropping out,
- was considered to be from a low SES background,
- was employed after school hours an average of 20 hours/week,
- was not involved in extra curricular activities,
- lacked confidence and had poor self-esteem,
- had been referred for disciplinary action repeatedly,
- felt a lack of parent and teacher support,
- averaged 30.2 days absent each year for the previous four or five years. . . . .

4. Attendance figures showed that:

- high school students who have been retained one or more times have higher absenteeism than their peers,
- absenteeism varies by grade level and school location,
- elementary schools in lower SES areas have higher absenteeism, and
- elementary schools and vocational school have the highest absenteeism followed by high schools and middle schools.

5. Sixty-five per cent of the students receive free/reduced lunch.

(Partial) Findings for Parental Support and Involvement:

1. Based on discipline referral reports, it is difficult to reach parents at home

because of work schedules. It was also reported that parents were positive about the contact, but were unsure or reluctant as to how to follow through.

2. Student survey responses indicated that many students wanted help with homework, but parents were either not available or were unable to help.

3. Interviews with principals indicated that parental involvement is stronger at the elementary level and decreases greatly at the middle/junior and high school levels. This is shown by attendance at school functions and parent conferences.

4. Demographic information portrayed adult illiteracy rates as high, with only 45% of the adult population over age 25 having beyond an eighth grade education.

Margaret and Mike decided to use tables and charts to portray as much information as possible. Mike prepared tables of grade distribution by grade level or subject area; test scores by grade level, sex, and school; absenteeism figures; discipline referrals; and enrollment in remedial programs.

Step 2 Discrepancy Analysis

Step 2 involves analyzing the data to identify discrepancies which are the basis for student needs. By comparing the information about current student performance with desired educational outcomes, student needs can be identified. The discrepancy or gap between "what is" and "what ought to be" is determined. Discrepancy analysis should be based on the existing needs assessment data summary. If any concerns have been expressed that have not been addressed in the data summary, additional data can be collected at this time.

The current state, or "what is," has previously been depicted by the data summary and data portrayal. The desired state or "what ought to be" should be determined by considering certain sources. A combination of any of the following could be used to help determine the desired state:

- research and professional literature;
- national and state norms;
- local values as obtained from community surveys, interviews, public forums;
- professional judgment; and

- existing goals.

A comparison of the current state and the desired state will reveal existing student needs. (See Appendix C for procedures for discrepancy analysis.) Questions to guide the discrepancy analysis are:

1. Has the desired state been depicted for each area of concern (as identified in the data summary and guided by the rationale)?
2. Has an appropriate method for discrepancy analysis been selected?
3. By comparing the desired outcomes to the current student performance, what are the areas of student need? (In what areas are students performing as desired? In what areas are students not performing as desired?)
4. Are the identified student needs well documented by the data summary?

Step 2 Discrepancy Analysis

It was determined that adequate data had been collected and summarized to depict the current state of student performance in Volunteer School System. The committee agreed that the system-wide and individual school goals, state and national testing norms, a review of professional research and literature, and subjective data collected which reflected local values would be synthesized to present a clear picture of the desired state of student performance. Because Margaret had easier access to this information, she agreed to collect and synthesize the data concerning the desired state according to the four categories represented in the data summary.

Margaret and Mike decided on how discrepancies would be determined. Subgroups would identify areas within each data summary category where the performance may be less than desired, or areas of discrepancy. The committee would then reconvene and discuss the current and desired states for each area, and apply a rating procedure to determine the severity of each identified discrepancy. The procedure would involve assigning a number from 1 (low) to 10 (high) to each area in order to rate the current state and the desired state. The actual discrepancy would be determined by finding the difference between the current state and the desired state.

The committee was then divided into four groups to examine each of the

categories in the data summary to identify the areas of discrepancy. For example, the subgroup for student academic performance identified grades, retention rates, and test scores as areas in which discrepancies exist. After the subgroups completed their tasks, the committee reconvened to proceed with the discrepancy analysis. At this point, Margaret and Mike explained the rating process to be used. Based on the information from each subgroup, the committee reached a current state rating for each area within the category. Margaret then presented relevant information concerning the desired state. Through discussion and consensus, the committee agreed on the desired state rating each area. Discrepancies were then determined.

	Current	Desired	Discrepancy
Student Academic Performance			
test scores	3	8	-5
grades	4	9	-5
retention rates	2	8	-6
Student Academic Opportunities			
enrichment opportunities	3	9	-6
transition between grade levels	7	7	0
At Risk Students			
number of students receiving diplomas	5	9	-4
self-esteem, self-discip., & responsibility	2	9	-7
attendance	4	8	-4
career awareness and planning skills	3	7	-4
Parental Support and Involvement			
adult literacy	4	7	-3
educ. supervision of latch-key students	5	7	-2
parental involvement	1	8	-7

Based on the discrepancy analysis, the committee identified the need for:

Improved test scores

Improved grades

Lower retention rates

Increased enrichment opportunities (including computer and test taking skills)

Maintenance of existing transition opportunities

Increased number of students receiving diplomas

Improved self-esteem, self- discipline, and responsibility

Increased attendance

Increased career awareness and planning skills

Increased adult literacy

Educational supervision of latch-key students

Increased parental involvement

Step 3 Priorities Among Identified Needs

Priorities are established by ranking those needs identified by discrepancy analysis. Priorities for needs are established through a systematic process. Prioritizing can be approached in several ways. (See Appendix C for possible prioritizing procedures.) Responsibility for establishing priorities may be assumed by the needs assessment committee, or the committee may enlist input from appropriate client groups (e.g., educators, staff members, students, parents, community members).

Regardless of the persons involved or the method selected, needs should be screened against certain criteria in order to establish priorities. As a minimum, the criteria should include, but not be limited to:

- worth (educational value and severity of the need),
- feasibility (resources available or obtainable), and
- impact (number of students/student groups affected and long term effect).

The critical nature of the prioritizing process requires careful planning and implementation. The following questions should guide the prioritizing process:

1. Have appropriate client groups been identified to be involved in prioritizing needs?
2. Has an appropriate method for prioritizing been selected?
3. In addition to worth, feasibility, and impact, have needs been screened against all appropriate criteria (i.e., interrelatedness of needs, potential for success, consequences of not meeting the need)?
4. Has the needs assessment process resulted in a prioritized list of well documented needs?

Analysis
Step 3 Prioritizing Needs

The committee began the process of prioritizing the identified needs. Consideration was given to involving additional participants in the prioritizing of needs, but it was felt that the committee represented the various client groups with the exception of students. At this point, one senior student was asked for input during the prioritizing process.

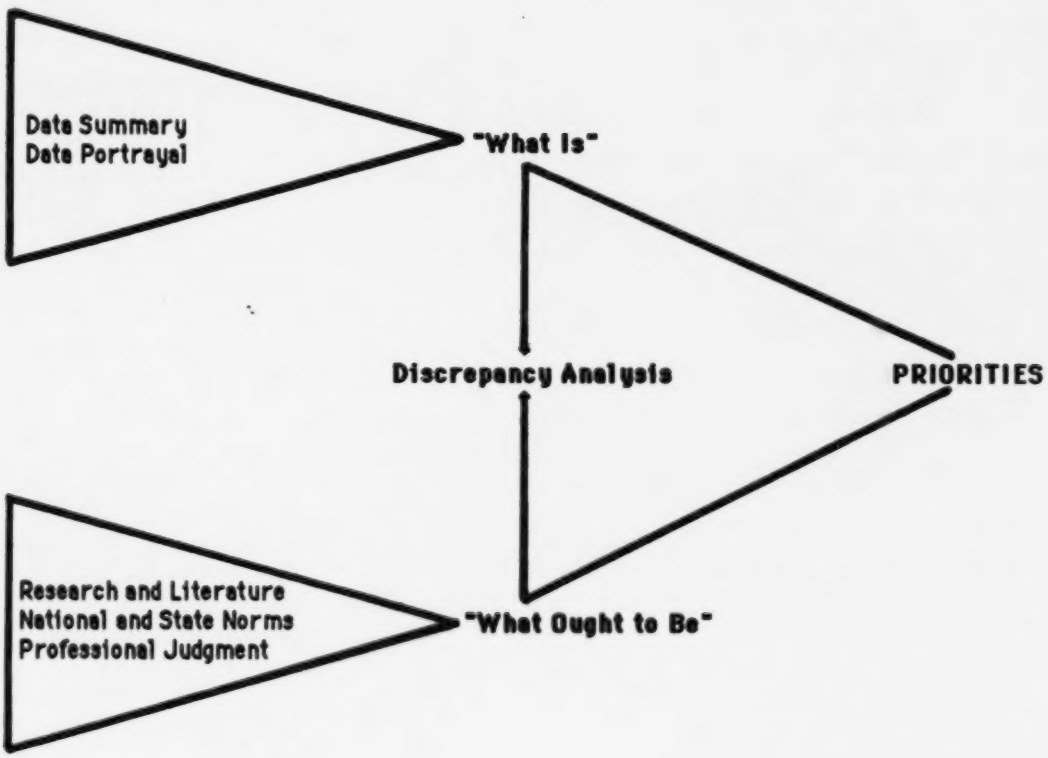
Margaret and Mike had determined that an adjusted need index would be used to prioritize the twelve needs. Margaret explained this method to the committee. In addition, a discussion preceded the prioritizing concerning the worth (educational value and severity of the need), feasibility (availability of resources), and impact (number of students affected and potential for success) of meeting each need.

In prioritizing needs, an adjusted need index was determined by subtracting the desired rating from the current rating and then multiplying by the desired rating for each need. For example, the adjusted need index for self-esteem was (9-2) X 9 = 63 The following list of prioritized needs was established:

1) improved self-esteem, self-discipline, and responsibility (63)
2) increased parental involvement (56)
3) increased enrichment opportunities (including computer and test taking skills) (54)
4) lower retention rates (48)
5) improved grades (45)
6) improved test scores (40)
7) increase number of students receiving diplomas (36)
8) increased attendance (32)
9) increased career awareness and planning skills (28)
10) increased adult literacy (21)
11) educational supervision of latch-key students (14)
12) maintenance of existing transition opportunities (0)

Margaret Jones shared the results of the needs assessment with the superintendent who then reported the results to the Volunteer Board of Education at the next scheduled meeting. Margaret then completed the Needs Assessment Report.

The following diagram represents the relationship of the data summary and analysis components. It is essential that each component of the needs assessment process link directly to the previous component.



NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

Guideline 4: A report should be prepared that accurately describes the needs assessment process.

As a minimum, the Needs Assessment Report should be a description of the overall process which includes:

a. personnel involved (including the coordinator; assistant coordinator, if applicable; and the needs assessment committee members);

b. data sources;

c. data summary and portrayal;

d. procedures used in discrepancy analysis;

e. needs determined by discrepancy analysis;

f. procedures used to determine priorities; and

g. prioritized needs.

This report should be a compilation of information collected and a description of the procedures used in the needs assessment process. (See Appendix D for a sample form for the Needs Assessment Report.)

Needs Assessment Reporting

Prior to submitting the Needs Assessment Report to SDE, Margaret shared it with the committee for final proofing and compilation of appendix materials. Diane suggested coordinating the summary with the appendix information by identifying the data source for each summary statement.

Needs Assessment Report

1. Name(s) of Coordinator (and Assistant Coordinator):

Coordinator: Margaret Jones

Assistant Coordinator: Mike McLaughlin

2. Names of Committee Members and Positions:

Name	Position
Sylvia Wright	Career Level III, high school English teacher
Harrison Smith	Middle school science teacher
Sandy Barnett	Career Level II, elementary reading resource teacher
Sara Hutchins	Volunteer High School principal
Arnold Lippencott	Central Junior High School principal
Charles Graham	South Elementary School principal
Diane Foster	High school mathematics teacher
Joe Henderson	High school guidance counselor
Mary Swartz	Parent

Needs Assessment Rationale and Background Information on Volunteer School System

Volunteer School System is located in the upper east part of Tennessee. We are located 95 miles from a large metropolitan area. The socio-economic level of most families is low due to the lack of industry in our area. We are primarily a farming community.

Volunteer School System is a very diverse school system supporting nearly 5,000 students. It covers schools in several small cities as well as rural locations. There is a wide range of school configurations and student enrollment patterns. There are seven elementary, two middle, one junior high, one high school, and one vocational school in the system. The elementary schools, in general, have student populations of between 100 and 325. Middle and junior high schools range from

250 to 800 students. The high school has a student population of approximately 1,600.

Local support for the school system is minimal. Adult illiteracy rates throughout the community are high and parental educational levels are very low. Active parental involvement in the schools, even at the elementary level, is far lower than in nearby urban school systems. A number of parents openly express the opinion that school beyond the 8th grade is unnecessary. Local referendums to provide financial support for the schools have failed for the last five years.

Volunteer School System has traditionally been plagued by high dropout rates, poor student attendance beyond the primary grades, and community apathy. Currently the large number of high school students failing English, mathematics, and social studies, particularly in the ninth grade, is a major concern. Teachers complain that students are coming to class unprepared, are discipline problems, and are not performing up to established standards and expectations. Teachers also feel a lack of parental support. Parents complain that students are apathetic, are reluctant to do homework, and are making poor grades. Students complain about a lack of parent and teacher understanding as well as the availability of "interesting" classes.

These issues are consistent with national concerns regarding at-risk students, low student test scores, student apathy, and poor student academic performance. The problems facing Volunteer School System are similar to those being faced by other school systems throughout the region.

3. Sources of Data Used:

- attendance figures (system-wide, by school, previous three years)
- grade distribution
- retention rates
- dropout rates
- test scores (including local performance, state and national norms)
    - Stanford Achievement
    - ACT/SAT
    - basic skills
    - proficiency
    - teacher assessments
- discipline referrals
- SACS report

- parent interviews
- teacher interviews
- principal interviews
- student survey
- free/reduced lunch report
- System goal statements
- follow-up study of graduates
- Commissioner's report card
- demographic report
- professional research and literature
- current course offerings and enrollment
- drop out profile

4. Data Summary (Include relevant material):

[In an effort to keep the scenario clear and concise, the data summary in this report represents only a partial listing of the findings.]

(Partial) Findings related to Student Academic Performance:

1. Retention figures showed failure rates increased significantly beginning with 4th grade and remained at approximately the same rate through the middle school grades. (Retention figures are included in Attachment I)
2. Retention figures indicated that failure rates increased again as students entered high school. (Attachment I)
3. Grade distribution showed failure rates at the high school level were consistently higher in English, mathematics, and social studies. (Attachment II)
4. Test scores revealed a high percentage (40%) of students in grades 4 and 5 scoring below state and national average in reading and mathematics. (Attachment III)
5. Teacher assessments showed a significant number of students reading below grade level in grades 3, 4, and 5.. (Attachment III)

(Partial) Findings for Student Academic Opportunities:

1. Enrollment figures showed that placement in transition classes for K-1 have increased during each of the last five years. Last year's needs assessment led to the development of a middle school transition class with 20% of the eighth graders enrolled. (Attachment IV)
2. Demographic information depicted Volunteer School System as a rural county located 95 miles from a large metropolitan area. Few cultural opportunities exist

locally.

3. In the latest SACS report, it was noted that few opportunities for enrichment exist for students at any level.

4. The student survey indicated strong interest in opportunities not currently available. These were: computer literacy, science and mathematics challenge courses, art, and test taking skills. (Attachment V)

5. Follow-up studies of graduates showed that many graduates who go on to college have to enroll in developmental courses. Graduates felt they lacked cultural/esthetic experiences. Of the graduates who did not go on to college, many reported the need for help in preparing for the ACT/SAT tests in order to gain admission to college and the need for vocational counseling and training.

6. Evaluations of previous extended contract activities demonstrated that transition classes were successful in terms of reduced retentions, increased academic success, and increased attendance.

(Partial) Findings for At Risk Students:

1. Retention figures showed failure rates at the high school level are higher for freshmen (%) and decrease during the junior and senior years. (Attachement I)

2. From interviews, factors thought by guidance counselors, principals, teachers, and parents to be contributing to student discipline problems and/or poor academic performance included lack of student preparation and attention to school work, lack of parental support, conflicts between teachers and students, assignments perceived as too difficult or irrelevant to student lives, student interpersonal relationships, and excessive demands on students.

3. The dropout profile described the typical dropout as a student who:

- left school during the freshman or sophomore year,
- failed two or more courses the semester prior to dropping out,
- was considered to be from a low SES background,
- was employed after school hours an average of 20 hours/week,
- was not involved in extra curricular activities,
- lacked confidence and had poor self-esteem,
- had been referred for disciplinary action repeatedly,
- felt a lack of parent and teacher support,
- averaged 30.2 days absent each year for the previous four or five years. . . . .

4. Attendance figures showed that:

- high school students who have been retained one or more times have higher absenteeism than their peers,

- absenteeism varies by grade level and school location,
- elementary schools in lower SES areas have higher absenteeism, and
- elementary schools and vocational school have the highest absenteeism followed by high schools and middle schools. (Attachment VI)

5. Sixty-five per cent of the students receive free/reduced lunch.

(Partial) Findings for Parental Support and Involvement:

1. Based on discipline referral reports, it is difficult to reach parents at home because of work schedules. It was also reported that parents were positive about the contact, but were unsure or reluctant as to how to follow through.
2. Student survey responses indicated that many students wanted help with homework, but parents were either not available or were unable to help. (Attachment VII)
3. Interviews with principals indicated that parental involvement is stronger at the elementary level and decreases greatly at the middle/junior and high school levels. This is shown by attendance at school functions and parent conferences.
4. Demographic information portrayed adult illiteracy rates as high, with only 45% of the adult population over age 25 having beyond an eighth grade education. Interviews with principals indicated that parental involvement is stronger at the elementary level and decreases greatly at the middle/junior and high school levels. This is shown by attendance at school functions and parent conferences.

5. Procedures Used In Discrepancy Analysis:

Each category of findings was examined by a group of committee members to identify areas of discrepancy. This information was presented to the total committee. Consensus was reached on a current state rating for each area on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high). Information relevant to the desired state for each area was presented which included system-wide and school goals, state and national testing norms, review of professional research and literature, and subjective data reflecting local values. Consensus was reached on the desired state rating on a scale of 1 to 10. Discrepancies were determined by finding the difference between the current state rating and the desired state rating.

6. Needs Determined by Discrepancy Analysis:

Improved test scores
Improved grades
Lower retention rates
Increased enrichment opportunities (including computer and test taking skills)

Maintenance of existing transition opportunities
Increased number of students receiving diplomas
Improved self-esteem, self- discipline, and responsibility
Increased attendance
Increased career awareness and planning skills
Increased adult literacy
Educational supervision of latch-key students
Increased parental involvement

7. Procedures Used to Determine Priorities:

A senior student was added to the committee since it was determined that student input was necessary to ensure adequate representation of all client groups in the prioritizing process. Each student need was discussed and evaluated in terms of its worth, feasibility, and potential impact. The adjusted need index was used to determine prioritized student needs.

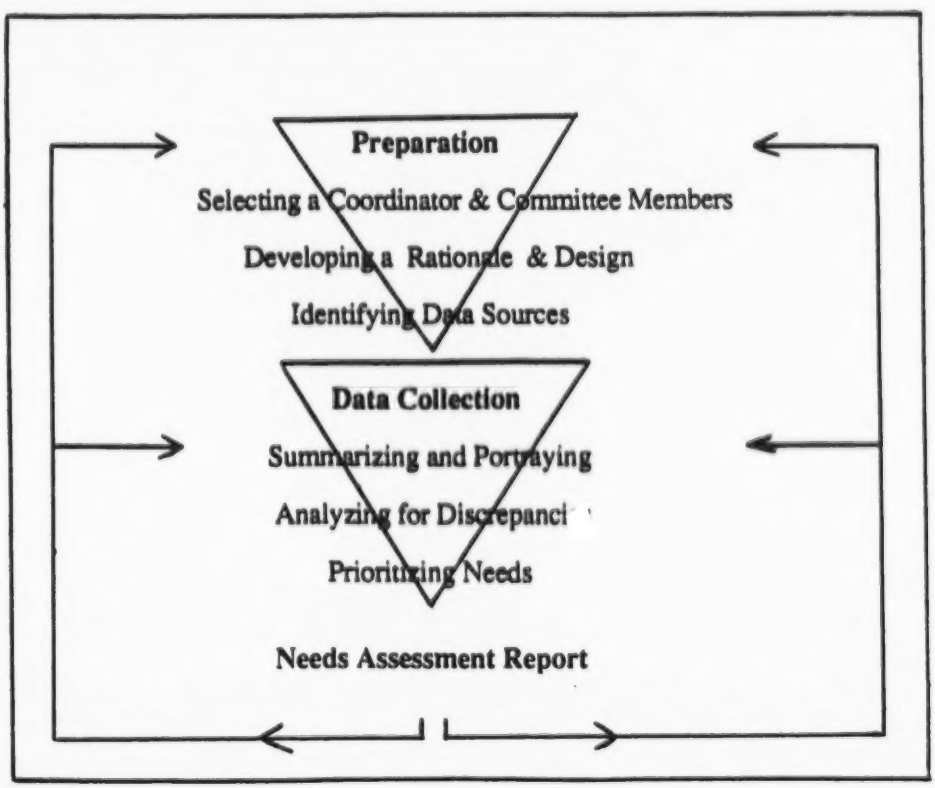
8. Prioritized Needs:

1) improved self-esteem, self-discipline, and responsibility
2) increased parental involvement
3) increased enrichment opportunities (including computer & test taking skills)
4) lower retention rates
5) improved grades
6) improved test scores
7) increase number of students receiving diplomas
8) increased attendance
9) increased career awareness and planning skills
10) increased adult literacy
11) educational supervision of latch-key students
12) maintenance of existing transition opportunities

Review

Conducting a needs assessment is a significant activity and should be the basis for program planning. It is a systematic process for documenting perceived concerns, comparing current performance against desired performance, and identifying high priority student needs. The structure of the process facilitates local level decision making by incorporating local values and expectations within the larger context of state and national norms and standards. The needs assessment process is generally linear with each component linked directly to the preceding component. It is also cyclical when information generated for one year is updated and used for subsequent needs assessment activities. (See Appendix E for a graphic depiction of the ongoing nature of the needs assessment process.)

This guide presents the basic tasks of a needs assessment with suggested guidelines for carrying out the process. The components are:



Successful completion of the needs assessment should result in a list of high priority student needs. These identified needs should then be addressed by educational goals and objectives. Educational goals should be general statements which give purpose or direction. The goals should be clear and unambiguous, timeless, nonmeasureable, and should focus on expected learner outcomes. Educational objectives are more specific statements of purpose or intent in which a time frame and a means of measurement are either stated or clearly implied.

Once goals and objectives have been developed, LEAs should determine the appropriate action or means to achieve the desired outcomes. Specific activities to meet student needs may be provided through system-wide efforts, individual school efforts, Extended Contract Programs, Alternative Incentive Programs, and other means available to school systems.

APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Surveys

Developing Questionnaires and Interviews

All organizations and school systems, from time to time, need to gather information that is not readily available in school documents or records. This can be accomplished through meetings, community forums, and surveys. The survey is a systematic, purposeful means of gathering data from groups of individuals whose perceptions are not available through other sources. Since surveys gather the perceptions of an entire group or a representative sample of that group, the findings can be considered to be representative of the total group. The findings can be the basis for developing a description of "what is."

In education, questionnaires and interviews are used most often to survey faculty members, students, parents, central office personnel, and community members. There are advantages and disadvantages to using either one. Questionnaires allow for the gathering of information from a large number of individuals. While they are generally easier, less time consuming, and less costly than many other methods to administer and to analyze, surveys do not always elicit representative, complete, totally accurate, and credible information. Respondents may not understand the questions and have no one to ask for clarification. In addition, some individuals selected for the survey will not complete or return the questionnaire.

The limitations of the questionnaire are advantages of the interview. Interviews assure that each selected respondent's perceptions are collected. They also provide a means for gathering more in-depth information than other methods. They allow for face to face interaction between the interviewer and the respondent. During the process the interviewer can follow up on leads, clarify ambiguous points, and gather additional information to clarify responses. Interviews, however, also have their limitations. The administration of the interview and the analysis of the responses are time consuming processes. In addition, the nature of interviews may introduce the element of subjectivity which can bias the results.

Careful consideration should be given to the development and administration of questionnaires or interviews to captialize on their advantages and to minimize their limitations. Using the collective input of a committee to develop and analyze the responses usually results in a better product.

The following steps should be considered in developing survey instruments. Examples, suggestions, and research findings are also provided for clarification.

1. Establish the purpose of the survey.

- Determine what information is needed and how it will be used. Survey information can be used to strengthen or substantiate other findings, suggest additional areas of strength or weakness, investigate concerns, or gather perceptions of various groups affected by the school.

- Determine whether the survey is the best means to gather this information. Are questionnaires, interviews, or other alternatives preferable for gathering this information? See Table of Data Sources (Appendix B).

2. Decide who should be surveyed.

- Determine what groups of people could best provide the needed information. These might include parents, current students, former students, faculty, central office personnel, school board members, community members, etc.

- Decide if it would be necessary or feasible to survey all members of a group or if a sample of the group should be surveyed. In order to get the best information, all

members of a selected group should be surveyed. Being included in a survey often helps group members identify with the school or school improvement process. Cost and time limitations, however, often necessitate using a sample. If a sample is selected, determine whether a random or a stratified random sample is more appropriate. Random sampling is a process in which all members of a given population have an equal chance of being selected. Names are randomly "drawn out of a hat" or are identified using a table of random numbers. A stratified random sample is a random sample based upon the various subgroups within a population. The following questions and ideas might be used to guide decisions regarding populations to be surveyed.

- If the survey is designed for use at an individual school site, would it be preferable or possible to survey all teachers, parents, and students or should a sample of each group be surveyed? This would also apply to a system-wide survey. Should all teachers/parent/students at all schools be surveyed or should representative samples be surveyed at each school or should all members at selected schools be surveyed?
- If a sample of parents is selected, should it be drawn from all parents regardless of grade level of the student (or other characteristic) or is it important to know the differences in perceptions of parents of students at various grade levels? If a sample of teachers is selected, is it important to know the differences of perceptions of teachers at various grade levels or in different subject areas? If a sample of students is selected, is it important to distinguish between their grade levels, ability levels, etc.?
- If it is important to distinguish between respondents (e.g., parents of students at various grade levels) determine what percentage of the total population fall into each major subgroup. Then randomly draw an equal number of names from each subgroup for a stratified random sample.

- Determine if one common survey can serve to gather the perceptions of various groups or if more than one survey should be developed.

3. Develop the content of the survey.

- Decide what types of questions to include. Surveys may include closed form questions (questions or statements which respondents rate or rank based on a given scale) or open ended questions to which respondents express their views. Closed form survey items are easier, faster, and less expensive to analyze while open ended questions are more difficult, time consuming, and expensive. Open ended questions, however, allow respondents to introduce or elaborate upon specific topics of interest or concern that may not have been included on the survey. Consider including both options.

- Determine how long the survey should be and the approximate amount of time it should take to complete it. This will affect the number and type of questions to be included.

- Decide how the questions will be analyzed. The types of questions included determine the choice of analysis procedures. Closed form questions can be hand tallied or machine scored. Open ended questions require content analysis of the responses. Time, cost, and skill factors required to analyze responses may affect the

types of questions included on the survey.

- Ask questions which will help gather the information needed. Be sure that the questions are comprehensive enough to gather all the desired perceptions, but do not ask for more information than is needed or will be used. Always include an "other" question that would allow respondents to introduce perceptions not covered by the survey.

- If multiple surveys are to be used, identify questions that are appropriate for all groups and those that are appropriate only for certain subgroups. Perceptions may differ on specific topics depending on the group being surveyed. Asking all groups the same question will highlight the differences in perceptions. Some questions may not be appropriate for all groups, but may be very important for specific groups. For example, parents may not have specific information on student dropouts while teachers, administrators, and former students who have dropped out of school may be able to provide this information. All groups, however, could respond to questions related to general satisfaction with school programs.

- Focus on needs of students, not activities or past programs. Items that focus on student performance, interests, participation, or problems are more likely to provide the information necessary to determine student needs. Survey items that ask whether teachers, administrators, students, or parents "would like" certain programs provide only "wish list" information. Asking respondents to assess the value of previous programs provides subjective opinion regarding the worth of those programs. The following example illustrates various types of questions that could be asked of teachers, students, and parents that focus on student needs.

****

Situation: A summary of data from a variety of sources indicates a high percentage of students performing below grade level, failing or making low grades, repeating courses, and requesting courses currently not offered. In addition, this system has dropout percentages higher than the state average. Parental involvement is also low.

Information Needed: In order to determine the perceptions of faculty, students, former students, and parents as to these conditions and why they exist, a survey would be an appropriate tool. Items such as the following illustrate closed form and open ended questions focused on student needs related to the areas of concern. For this example, categories to consider in a survey could include (but would not be limited to) school programs, services, and course offerings; instruction; the quality of school life; parental involvement; and problems identified by each respondent group. The following items are only a few examples of many that would be needed for a survey of this kind.

****

Questions appropriate for all three groups:
teachers, students, and parents

Closed form questions:

Response Scale: (1 = do not agree....4 = strongly agree)

High rates of absenteeism affect student academic progress	1	2	3	4
Guidance services are available to assist students in college or career planning	1	2	3	4
Courses are available to meet students' academic needs	1	2	3	4
Courses are available for students with special needs: gifted	1	2	3	4
Courses are available for students with special needs: remedial	1	2	3	4

Open ended questions:

How could the services provided by the school be improved?

Why do you think students drop out of school?

Is there anything of interest or concern to you that has not been included on the survey? Please explain.

Questions unique to a particular respondent group

Closed form questions:

Response Scale: (1 = do not agree.....4 = strongly agree)

Teachers:

Courses are available to meet all students' academic needs.	1	2	3	4
Students come to class with homework completed.	1	2	3	4
Teachers or guidance counselors help students handle personal or academic problems.	1	2	3	4
Time is available for me to provide extra help for students who need it.	1	2	3	4
Parents contact teachers regarding their child's progress.	1	2	3	4
Parents support the schools' academic expectations for their child.	1	2	3	4

Students:

I can schedule courses that meet my academic needs.	1	2	3	4
Courses available to me are interesting and challenging.	1	2	3	4
I am able to do my homework without extra help.	1	2	3	4
If I have a problem, there is someone available to help me.	1	2	3	4
If I need extra help, teachers are willing and available to help me.	1	2	3	4

Parents:

Courses are available to meet my child's academic needs.	1	2	3	4
I am informed if my child does not turn in homework.	1	2	3	4
If my child has a problem, someone is available to listen or to help.	1	2	3	4

If my child needs extra help, teachers are willing and available to help. 1 2 3 4
I am kept informed of my child's progress. 1 2 3 4
The school encourages me to become involved. 1 2 3 4

Other types of closed form questions might include:

Asking respondents to select the most appropriate item or asking them to rank several items.

Thinking of leisure time, how will you spend most of your time? Select the activity in which you spend the most time.

_____ sleeping
_____ watching television
_____ being with friends
_____ at the mall
_____ participating in outdoor recreational activities
_____ reading
_____ other (Please specify)

Thinking of leisure time, how will you spend most of your time? Rank each statement according to the following scale:

1 = what I do most often...to 7 = what I do least often.

_____ sleeping
_____ watching television
_____ being with friends
_____ at the mall
_____ participating in outdoor recreational activities
_____ reading
_____ other (Please specify)

Asking respondents to provide information on specific topics.

For students:

- How many hours a week do you work?
- Does your work schedule interfere with your school work?
  Yes___ No___
- In which of your classes do you need extra help or tutoring to succeed?
- If you have personal or academic problems, from whom do you receive help?

For parents:

- How many times have you been to the school this year?
- Are you able to help your child with homework?
- Approximately how many hours of homework does your child complete each night?
- Approximately how many hours does your child spend watching TV each week?
- What kinds of communication, other than report cards, do you receive from your child's teacher(s)?

Open ended questions:

For Teachers:
- What do you perceive to be the strengths of our academic program?
- What are some academic needs of our students that are not being met?
- What changes would you suggest to improve student performance?

For Students:
- What do you like best about the school?
- What do you like least?
- What changes would you make in order to improve the school?

For Parents:
- What aspects of the school program best meet your child's needs?
- What aspects of the school program need to be improved?
- What suggestions do you have for improving the overall school program?

- For interviews, develop an interview guide to structure the interview process and to maintain consistency among the interviewers. The guide should include a list (in order) of the questions to be asked as well as probes that would be used to encourage the respondent to explain a response in greater detail. Questions and probes should be stated on the interview guide as they will be asked.

4. Develop the survey format.

- Word questions as objectively, directly, and simply as possible. Short, directly stated items at an appropriate level of readability are easy to understand and are less likely to confuse respondents. Negative items or items with technical terms, "big words," or jargon often confuse respondents resulting in misinterpretations. Clarity of each item is essential. Because the item must have the same meaning for each respondent, avoid using words like "many," "most," or "usually" which have no precise meaning (Borg & Gall, 1983).

- Include questions that structure, but do not bias responses. Avoid loaded or biased words as well as leading questions. Make statements or questions as objective as possible so that responses are not influenced by the wording of the item. Either suggest all possible answers to a question or none at all.

- Design the layout of the survey. Borg and Gall (1983, p. 422) identify the following rules for developing a questionnaire layout.

    - Make the questionnaire attractive. This can be achieved by using colored ink or colored paper, or by laying out the front page in an artistic manner.
    - Organize and lay out questions so the questionnaire is as easy to complete as possible.
    - Number the questionnaire items and pages.
    - Put name and address of person to whom form should be returned at beginning and end of questionnaire even if a self-addressed envelope is included.
    - Include brief, clear instructions, printed in bold type.

- Use examples before any items that might be confusing or difficult to understand.
- Organize the questionnaire in some logical sequence. For example, you may decide to group together related items or those that use the same response options.
- Begin with a few interesting and nonthreatening items.
- Do not put important items at the end of a long questionnaire.
- Avoid using the words "questionnaire" or "checklist" on your form. Many people are prejudiced against these words.
- Include enough information in the questionnaire so that items are meaningful to the respondent.
- Keep the questionnaire as short as possible to achieve the objectives of the survey. The length of the overall survey does have a small effect on the response rate.

The following suggestions should guide the development and administration of interviews.

- Establish a comfortable atmosphere for the interview. Select a setting that is quiet and free of interruptions. The interviewer and the respondent should sit side by side so the respondent can see what is being written. The interviewer should maintain a friendly but professional attitude.
- Allow ample time for the respondent to answer the questions without feeling rushed.
- Use lead in questions, not directly related to the objectives of the interview, to put the respondent at ease.
- Keep the language level consistent with that of the respondent. Select wording that has a common meaning for all groups (e.g., avoid unfamiliar technical terms, colloquial terms)
- Avoid long, ambiguous, or confusing questions.
- Keep each question focused on one idea.
- Use open ended questions for more complex topics.
- Begin the interview with easy to answer, descriptive, nonthreatening questions. Reserve complex, controversial, or difficult questions for the middle or end of the interview.
- Include a question that allows the respondent to introduce information not directly asked by the other questions. This could be done by asking directly if the respondent has anything to add that has not been addressed by the other questions on the survey.
- Include questions that cross-check the responses to other questions.

- Establish a frame of reference for the survey. For questionnaires, include a cover letter or introductory paragraph explaining the purpose and importance of the questionnaire and asking for cooperation of the respondent in completing and returning it on time. The amount of explanation necessary will depend on the group being surveyed and circumstances under which the questionnaire is administered. A questionnaire mailed home to parents, for example, may require a more lengthy written explanation than one where directions are given orally to parents at a PTA meeting. For interviews, develop

an introduction which clearly states the purpose of the interview, the reason why the respondent was selected, and assurances of confidentiality.

- If multiple respondent groups will be completing the survey, decided how to identify them. This could be done by color coding the questionnaires or interviews or by placing an identifying number on them (e.g., "1" for parents, "2" for students). Include demographic information if there will be a need to analyze responses by subgroups of respondents.

- Assure confidentiality of your respondents. Procedures for assuring confidentiality should be developed. An explanation regarding confidentiality should be included on the survey instrument.

5. Pilot test the survey.

- Construct the survey in its "final" format.

- Train the individuals administering the surveys. Procedures for the introduction and distribution of the surveys, directions given to the respondents, and collection procedures should be consistent for all individuals responsible for administering a survey. An additional step must be taken prior to piloting the interview. In order for all interviews to be conducted consistently, interviewers should fully understand the objectives of the interview, the questions, possible probes, and safeguards to assure confidentiality and accuracy. They should practice conducting the interview with several "subjects" to become so familiar with the questions and probes that the interview can be conducted almost conversationally. In addition, this practice will enable them to receive feedback on their abilities as interviewers. This feedback can come from the "subjects" and from analyzing tape recordings of the practice interviews. In order to build reliability among the interviewers, it is advisable to review tape recordings as a group.

- Engage the help of several members from groups similar to those which will complete the survey. For example, if teachers at three schools are the population to be surveyed, ask a small group (five to ten teachers) from a fourth school to complete the pilot questionnaire or interview.

- Administer the pilot survey following the same procedures you plan to use for the actual survey.

- Record the amount of time used by the respondents to complete the survey. This will aid in determining the length of time needed to administer the survey.

- When the respondents have completed the survey, gather their reactions to the procedures used in the survey as well as the content. Questions such as the following might be helpful in gathering this information.

  - Were the directions clear?
  - Was the response format of the survey easy to follow?
  - Was the survey too short, too long, or about right?
  - Was each question clear?
  - Did the questions seem repetitive, unnecessary, appropriate?
  - Were the areas of concern not covered in the survey questions?
  - How can the survey be improved?

- Revise the survey based on the reactions to the pilot survey. If the changes are substantial, it may be necessary to pilot test the survey again.

6. Administer the survey.

- Decide how the survey will be administered. It is advisable to administer the a questionnaire to the entire group at one time whenever possible (e.g., teachers in a faculty meeting, students in a classroom). Response rates are higher, directions are more clearly understood, and surveys are more accurately completed in a group setting. Administering interviews will require scheduling each respondent in a way that will be the least disruptive.

- Additional considerations should be taken when questionnaires are not administered in a group setting. The following information might be helpful in developing and administering such questionnaires.

    - Written directions must be more complete.
    - The response rate from parents and community members is usually better if a shorter time (2 or 3 days) is allowed before they are to be returned and the time does not extend over a weekend.
    - The response rate is usually better if the questionnaires are mailed out with a self-addressed, stamped return envelope.
    - If questionnaires for parents are to be transported by students, special instructions should be given to the students. Some kind of recognition for students bringing them back contributes to a higher response rate.
    - To assure confidentiality of the respondents, questionnaires should be distributed with unmarked return envelopes. The envelopes should not be opened until all returned questionnaires are collected at one central location.

7. Analyze the survey results.

- To analyze closed form questions, tally the results by hand or machine.

- Open-ended questions need to be content-analyzed. The following procedures can guide the content analysis process.

    - Identify the individuals who will be responsible for analyzing the responses to the open ended questions. Involve them in establishing the coding procedures as well as in analyzing the surveys.
    - Using a small number of surveys, identify themes recurring in responses. Several processes can be used to identify the themes. Coders could work together to identify common themes. Each coder could independently analyze the same few surveys and then, in a group setting, compare themes to those of the other coders to establish categories.
    - Categorize responses under each of the identified themes into a checklist against which to code the remaining survey responses.
    - Analyze another group of surveys to determine whether the categories fit the responses. Reword existing categories or add additional categories if necessary. Include a "miscellaneous"

category for all single responses that do not fit the designated categories.

- Analyze the remaining surveys. When all are completed, reanalyze the "miscellaneous" responses to see if there are any additional themes or categories.

8. Use the survey results.

- Summarize the data.
  - Construct charts, tables, or graphs where appropriate.
  - Write findings in objective, precise statements. The use of figures or percentages makes the findings more precise.

- Communicate findings with the groups surveyed. Meetings (e.g., community, PTA, teachers), letters, or newsletters are appropriate means for communicating this information.

- Compare findings to those from other data sources. Note how these findings substantiate or contradict information from other sources.

Appendix B: Table of Data Sources

READILY ACCESSIBLE DATA SOURCES

Enrollment figures

Attendance figures

Grades

Basal reader placement

Referrals
- -discipline
- -counseling

Class trend sheets
- -by grade level
- -by geographic area of the system

Student profile records
- -family background
- -interests
- -achievements
- -parental employment
- -free or reduced lunch reports

Standardized tests
- -Stanford
- -TASK 2
- -Basic Skills First
- -Tennessee Standardized Test Results Summary
- -Proficiency
- -Other

Financial records
- -amount spent per student
- -amount spent for supplies, materials, equipment

Goal statements
- -system wide goals
- -school goals
- -annual goals
- -long range goals

Subjective data
- -parent comments
- -student comments
- -teacher and administrator comments
- -counselor comments

ADDITIONAL DATA SOURCES

Follow up studies
- -post secondary education
- -post secondary employment
- -graduates' assessment of school experience

Previous school improvement plans
Accreditation reports
Letters of notification from the state
Personnel qualifications
Curriculum studies
Program evaluation reports
School system sponsored surveys
Community sponsored surveys
Interviews with community members
Commissioner's Report Card
Governor's Task Force Report
Demographic studies/reports
Reports of public hearings/meetings
Information from interest groups
Real estate agency reports
Chamber of Commerce reports
National education reports
Research studies
Professional literature
Newspaper/magazine articles
Evaluations of Extended Contract activities
Previous needs assessments
Student profiles (retained/at risk)
Interviews/surveys of students who have dropped out
Juvenile court statistics
Future plans of senior students
Survey of potential employers
Alcohol and drug surveys

Appendix C: Data Analysis

Several options for data analysis exist. Many factors determine how analysis will be conducted which include: type(s) of information collected, local context, expressed purpose of the assessment, etc. Because these factors are never exactly the same in any two needs assessments, there are no real prescriptions for data analysis. However, several approaches which may be useful in data analysis are briefly described below.

Options for Organizing Existing Data for Summary and Analysis

Ways to portray the data

- Organize attendance and dropout data by showing percentages by year for a given period (the last three to five years) or percentages by grade level, race, or sex.
  (South Carolina Department of Education, 1986)
- Organize accreditation reports by year, in terms of status, or by listing specific deficiencies.
  (South Carolina Department of Education, 1986)
- Separate standardized test results by socioeconomic level, race, etc.
  (South Carolina Department of Education, 1986)
- Test results could be organized and portrayed as follows:

STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TEST RESULTS

DISTRICT WIDE RESULTS

(Scores are national percentiles based on large group norms)

Total Reading (Grades 2-5), Reading Comprehension (Grades 6-12) year/grade	2	3	4	5	7	8	9	12
1984-85	54	55	48	46	45	47	46	71
1985-86	50	57	46	43	44	43	39	67
1986-87	52	59	50	37	44	46	41	69
1987-88	55	61	48	45	45	48	43	64

Total Math year/grade	2	3	4	5	7	8	9	12
1984-85	60	62	53	66	68	57	59	68
1985-86	63	65	57	68	66	65	58	60
1986-87	59	61	60	65	69	74	61	56
1987-88	61	64	59	64	69	71	57	59

Total Social Studies year/grade	2	3	4	5	7	8	9	12
1984-85	N/A	47	50	45	39	45	43	66
1985-86	N/A	53	51	40	41	39	35	65
1986-87	N/A	48	49	41	37	47	39	68
1987-88	N/A	45	46	44	40	45	41	69

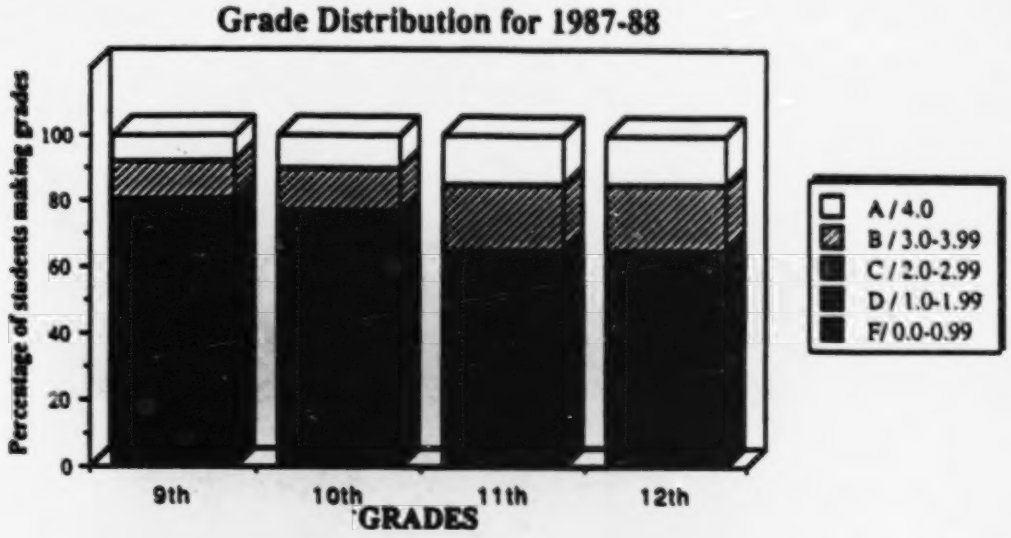
- Discipline referrals could be portrayed in the following manner (partial listing):

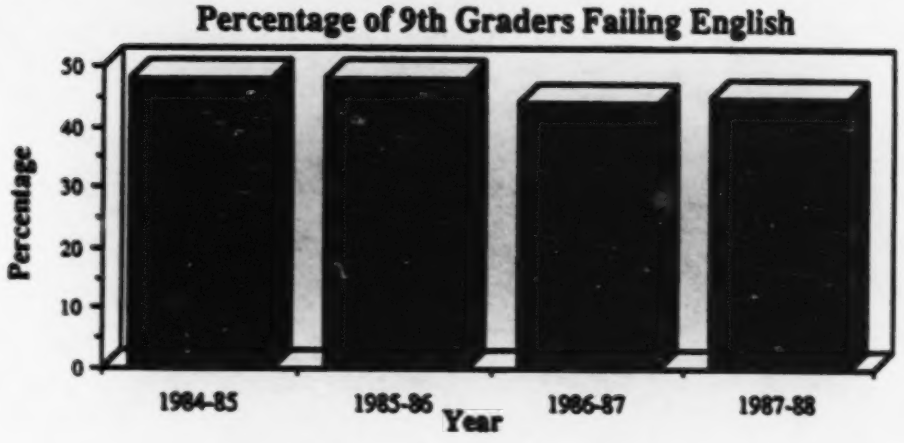
	class tardies	absences	fighting	profanity	stealing	drugs	smoking	classroom disturbances	tardy to school	absent from school	suspension
Abbott, S.	2	4							5	2	
Adams, B.						1					1
Adcock, C.			3	2				7			2
Addison, M.								1			
Adkins, T.		4			1	2	4	2		3	2

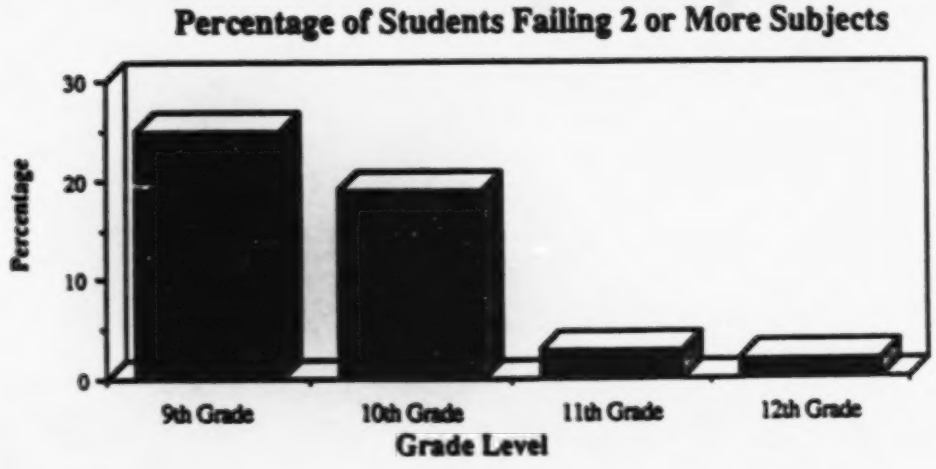
Discipline Referrals Totals (1984-85):

Fighting	177
Profanity	152
Stealing	29
Drugs	28
Alcohol	10
Smoking	101
Classroom Disturbances	422
Class Cuts	608
Excessive Tardiness	77

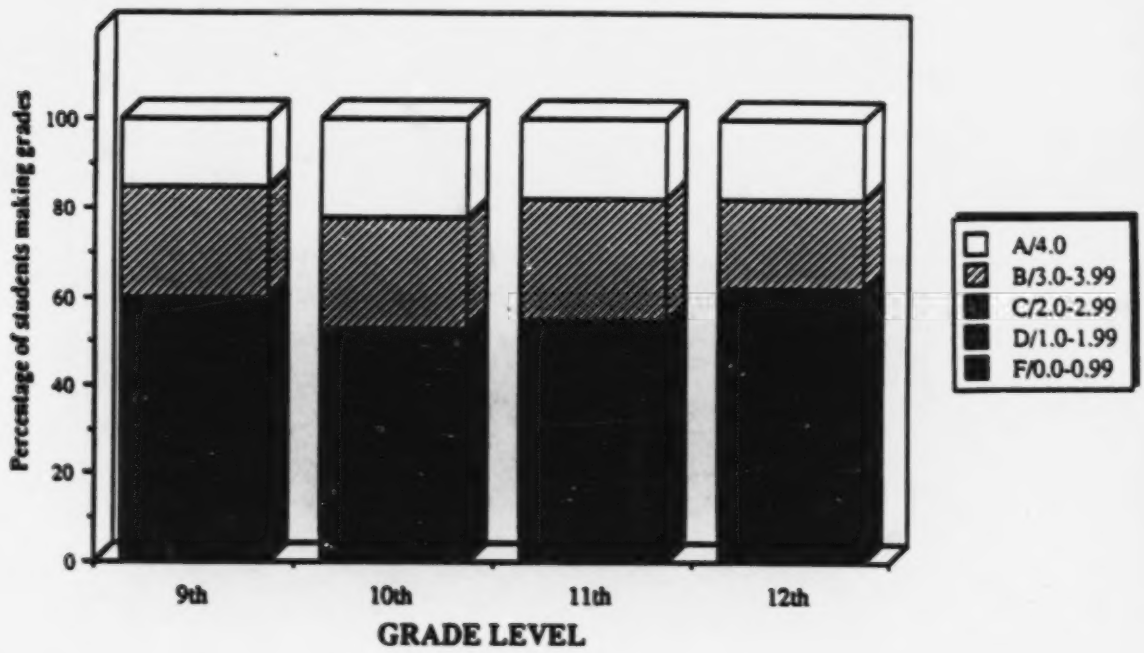
• Grade Distribution could be portrayed as follows:



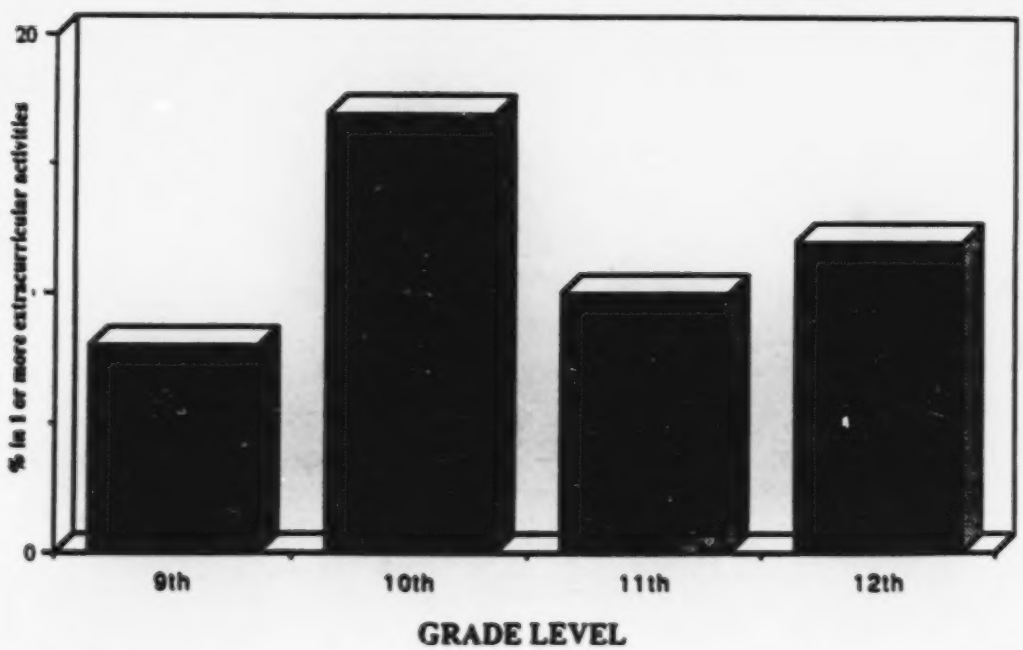




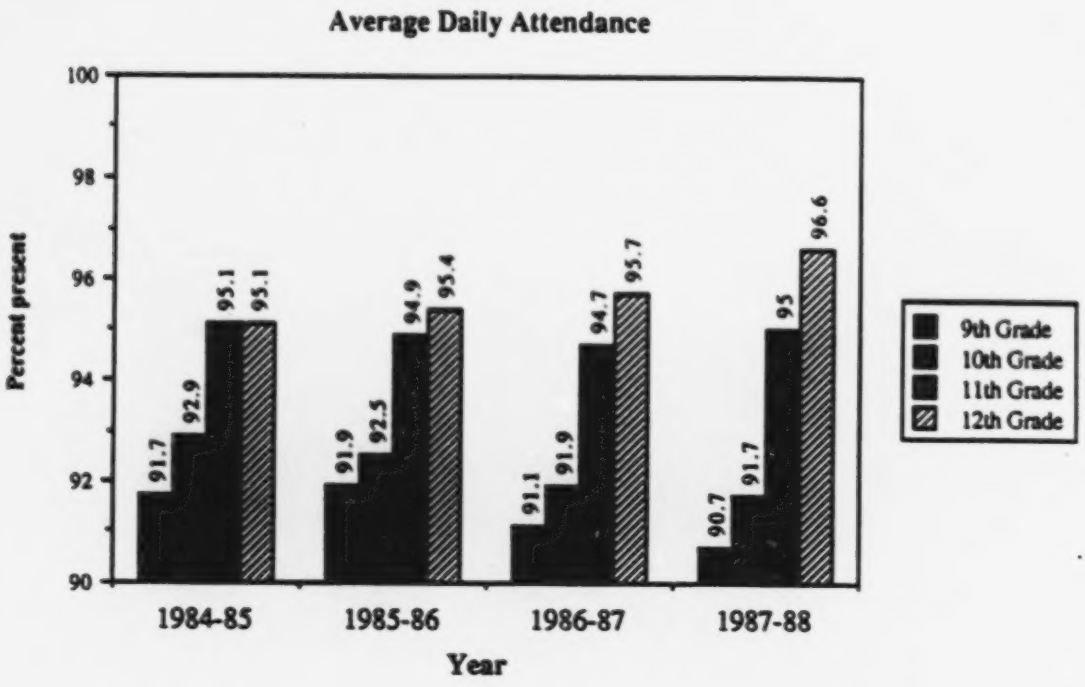
Grade Distribution: students in 1 or more extracurricular activities

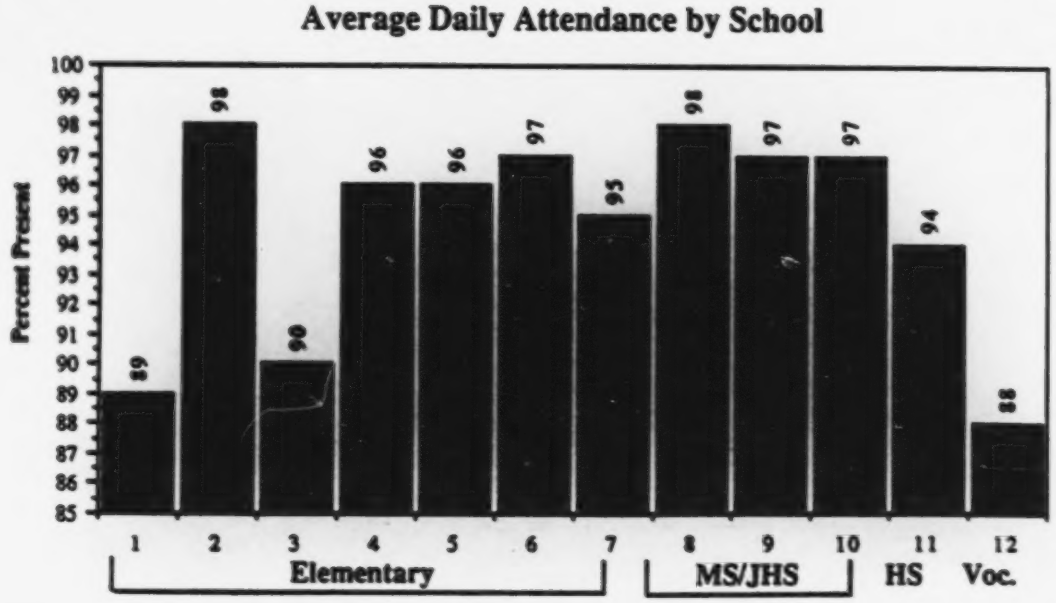


Extracurricular Participation of Students Failing 2 or More Classes



- Attendance information could be portrayed as follows:





• **Descriptive statistics** can be used to organize and present data in a more usable and meaningful way. According to Stufflebeam, McCormick, Brinkerhoff, and Nelson (1985), "this technique involves looking at the typical performance through the use of medians, means, and modes; the variability of performance through the computation of frequency distributions, variances, standard deviations, and identification of the range of score" (p. 211). Descriptive statistics "...provide an efficient means of summarizing large quantities of data that would otherwise be uninterpretable and also provide the basis for more sophisticated analyses" (p. 212).

mean - sum of scores divided by the number of scores (average)
median - the point above and below which half the scores fall
mode - score with the highest frequency of occurrence
range - difference between the lowest and highest scores
standard deviation - the square root of the sum of squared deviations of all scores from the mean of the distribution.

• **Content analysis** is a way to organize and present narrative information. According to Stufflebeam et al. (1985), "content analysis is a general analysis technique for use in reducing complex narrative information (transcriptions of meetings, court rulings, position papers, newspaper accounts, and so forth) to simpler terms (a list of issues, key assumptions, proposed outcomes, alleged problems). The outcome of content analysis might be simply the list of items that were identified, a frequency distribution of the number of times each item was mentioned, a taxonomy based on the items, a matrix that relates the items to one or more other variables, or an index that indicates how much of some characteristic is present in the information" (p. 214).

Ways to organize the data summary

• Data summaries are a listing of objective, precise findings. Summaries are generally quite lengthy, therefore some type of organization is helpful. Data summaries can be organized by categories. The following examples represent categories which may be appropriate:

data source (attendance figures, test scores, survey findings, etc.)
grade level (elementary, middle, high, system-wide)
student population (total, at-risk, gifted, students working below grade level, etc.)
concerns stated in the rationale (adult illiteracy, enrichment opportunities, remedial programs, parental involvement, etc.)

• If appendix material is included with the Needs Assessment Report, it may be desirable to reference the appendix following each summary statement. (See the scenario.)

Options for Conducting the Discrepancy Analysis

• **Inferential statistics** are techniques which help to establish relationships, make comparisons, measure changes, evaluate effectiveness, etc. According to Stufflebeam et al. (1985), "inferential statistical methods assist you in making inferences about a given population from data on a sample of that population. A wide range of statistical procedures are included in this category: analysis of variance (ANOVA), discriminant analysis, linear regression analysis, correlation, path analysis, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), factor analysis, and others" (p. 212). These techniques may require the use of specialized computer software.

• **Matrices** can be used in needs assessments for discrepancy analysis. Each matrix can be used to compare the actual performance to the desired performance. The example presented below shows how subjective data (e.g., survey, interview, comments) can be analyzed using a matrix. Opinions from each respondent group (students, parents/community members, teachers, administrators, etc.) are expressed in terms of current performance ("what is") and desired performance ("what ought to be") related to expressed concerns.

Concern: Enrichment
Data Source: Survey

Opinions of:	What is	What ought to be
Students	No "interesting" classes	Computers, Art, Theater, Speech
	No "challenging" classes	Calculus, AP History
Teachers	Not enough time to offer extra courses	More time for enrichment
	Students are not challenged by by current curriculum	Expanded curriculum
	Students are culturally deprived	Cultural opportunities
Parents	Students are not prepared for college	Higher ACT/SAT scores
		Expanded curriculum
		Cultural opportunities

In the example presented below, the performance of students on the Stanford Achievement Test

is analyzed in terms of the total student population as well as those students who are performing above average and those who are performing below average.

Data Source: Stanford Achievement Test (Mathematics) 1987-88

	Total Population	Above Average	Below Average
Actual Performance	60% scored at/above 70th percentile	9% scored above 90th percentile	8% scored below 20th percentile
Desired Performance	70% by 1988-89	15% by 1988-89	5% by 1988-89

• A **rating process** can be used in conducting the discrepancy analysis. In the following example, concerns identified from the data summary are rated on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) in terms of the current performance and the desired level of attainment. The discrepancy is shown by determining the difference between the current performance and the desired level of attainment.

Concerns	Current Performance	Desired Level of Attainment	Discrepancy
Enrichment for Gifted and Talented Students	5	8	-3
Adult Literacy	5	9	-4
Latch-Key Students	6	6	0
At-Risk Students	6	8	-2
Parent Involvement	6	9	-3
Handicapped Students	3	5	-2
Remediation for Students Performing Below Ability	5	10	-5
Enrichment for All Students	5	10	-5

Discrepancies identified in the analysis process should be the basis for determining student needs. Regardless of the discrepancy analysis process used, a non-prioritized list of student needs should result.

Optional Procedures for Prioritizing Student Needs

The following procedures for prioritizing needs were adapted from goal ranking techniques described in the literature by Witkin (1977), Doll (1982), Hershkowitz (1976), Mitchell and Gluck (1986), and Stufflebeam et al. (1985).

- **Weighted Ranking Procedure** is particularly helpful when numerous needs have been identified. For example, if thirty needs have been identified, each individual assigns a 5 to the top one-third (or ten) of the needs felt to be of the highest priority. Then, a 3 is assigned to the middle one-third, and a 1 is assigned to the bottom one-third of the remaining needs. Totals are then calculated for each need which creates a list of prioritized needs.

- **Paired Weighting Procedure** involves groups or individuals in comparing identified needs two at a time until each and every need has been matched with every other need and ranked by comparison.

- **Budget Allocation** involves individuals or groups "allocating" a number of points (or imaginary amounts of money) among a set of needs. Needs are ranked according to the total number of points (or dollars) they are assigned.

- **Sorting Cards** involves writing each need on an index card. The cards are then arranged by priority. The activity may be done by one group (such as the needs assessment committee) or by two or three separate groups which are eventually brought together through consensus.

- **Rating Sheets** are similar to sorting cards, except that the needs are written and ranked on a single large sheet as opposed to individual cards.

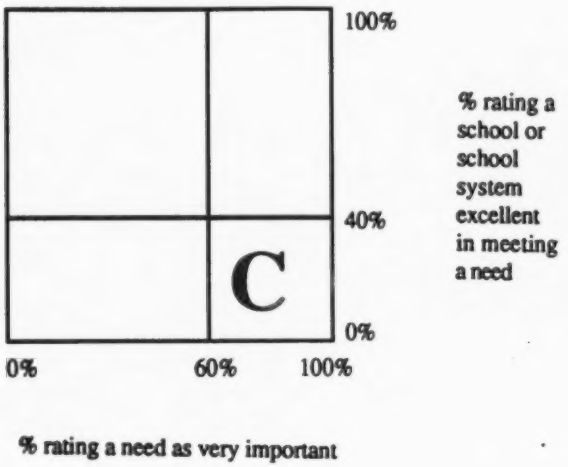
- **Adjusted Need Index** can be applied when compatible data for both "desired results" and "current results" is available.

Adjusted Need Index = (Desired - Current) x Desired

For example, lowering the dropout rate may be ranked "2" currently and "5" desired:
(5-2) x 5 = 15
Needs can be ranked according to the values attained by the adjusted need index.

• **Model For Perceived Extent of Goal Attainment** (Hershkowitz, 1976) may be adapted in order to establish priorities among student needs. It is helpful when survey respondents (parents, teachers, students, and community members) have been asked to rate or rank needs for importance and to estimate the schools' current success in meeting these needs. The results may be portrayed as follows:

C = critical need area



The needs which fall into the "C" region are of the highest priority.
(Hershkowitz, 1976)

• **Criteria** to be used to screen needs during the prioritizing process were suggested in the body of the guide. In addition, Neill (1983) suggests that the following criteria be used for prioritizing needs:

1. the size of the discrepancy between the current status and the desired status;
2. the number of clients that will be affected by fulfilling (or not fulfilling) each need;
3. the criticality (or severity) of the need;
4. the possibility of satisfying more than one need with a goal (interrelatedness);
5. the significant consequences that would result if the need were not met;
6. the necessary sequence which must be followed (Must a certain need be satisfied before others can be satisfied?);
7. the feasibility of meeting the need (in terms of money, time, etc.); and
8. the amount of support or concern that the need elicits from the community (p. 19).

Appendix D: Sample Needs Assessment Report

Components To Be Addressed:

1. Name(s) of Coordinator (and Assistant Coordinator):

2. Names of Committee Members and Positions:

3. Sources of Data Used:

4. Data Summary (Include relevant material):

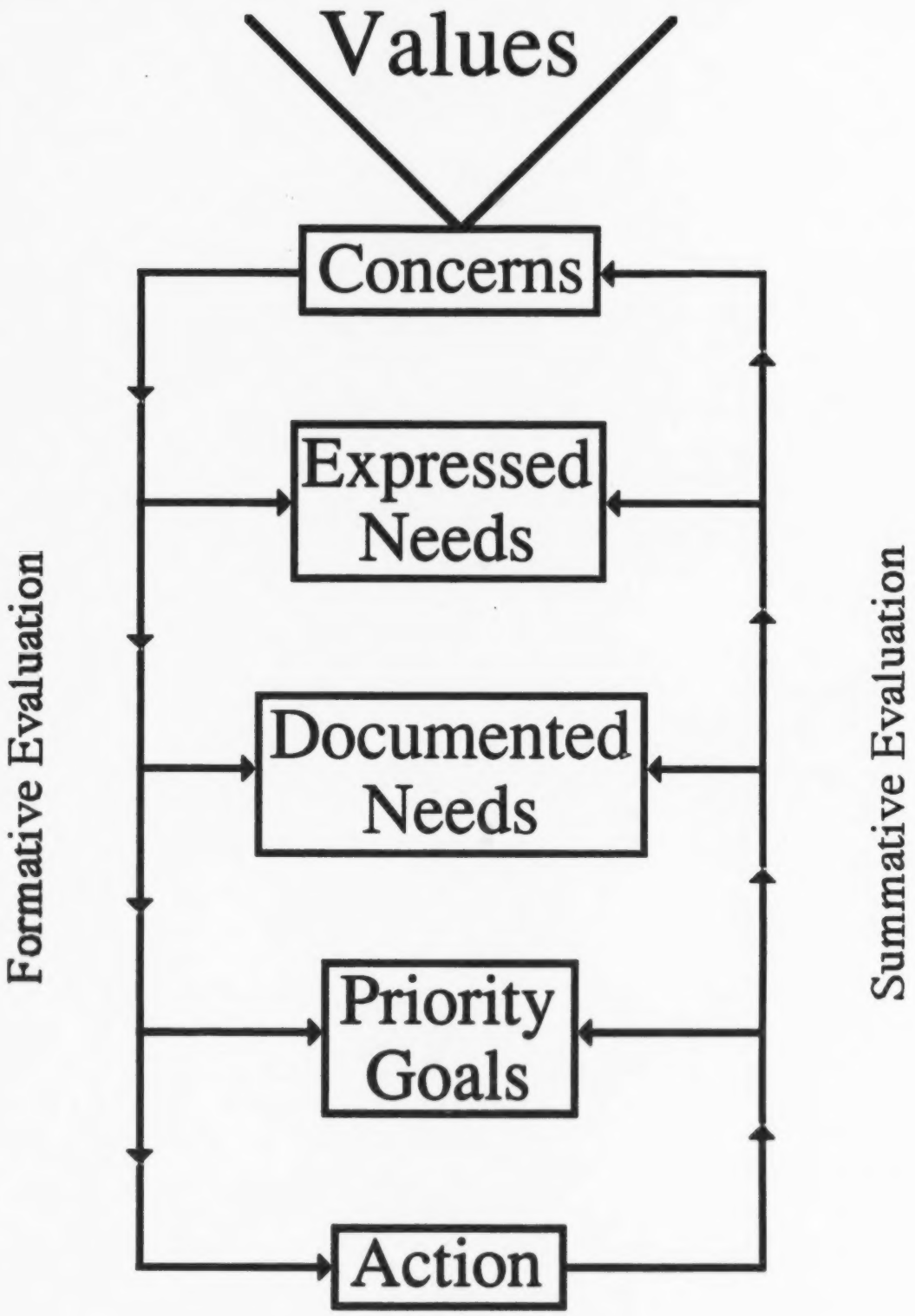
5. Procedure(s) Used in Discrepancy Analysis:

6. Needs Determined by Discrepancy Analysis:

7. Procedures Used to Determine Priorities:

8. Prioritized Needs:

Appendix E: Needs Assessment Graphic



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Bellon and Handler present an approach to curriculum development and evaluation in which the two processes are seen as simultaneous, complementary processes. The role of needs assessement in the development and evaluation process is discussed.

Berrie, P. J. (1977). Assessing instructional needs in your district. Clearing House, 50 (5), 221-223.

Berrie explains reasons for doing a needs assessment, the importance of focusing the needs assessment toward the student, and steps for conducting a needs assessment.

Borg, W.R., & Gall, M.D. (1983). Educational research: An introduction (4th Ed.). New York: Longman.

Basic educational research components and processes are presented in readable, non-statistician terms. Of particular interest is the presentation of survey and interview design and analysis.

Doll, R. C. (1982). Curriculum improvement: Decision making and process (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Doll suggests processes or approaches to needs assessments as well as methods of data collection.

English, F. W. (1977). The politics of needs assessment. Educational Technology, 17 (11), 18-23.

English describes and analyzes political situations that may emerge when needs assessments are implemented. The problems tend to relate to resistance to power-sharing, resistance to change among educators, and the lack of informed opinion in the public about educational issues.

English, F. W. (Ed.). (1983). Fundamental curriculum decisions. Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD.

English compares and contrasts needs assessment and evaluation. Seventeen models of needs assessments are summarized.

English, F. W., & Kaufman, R. A. (1975). Needs assessment: A focus for curriculum development. Washington, D.C.: ASCD.

This is a short book describing the authors' fourteen step discrepancy model approach to needs assessment as well as the philosophy behind it.

Heath, R. W. (1985). Considerations in needs assessment design (Working Paper No. 1). Honolulu, HI: Kamehameha Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 287 561)

In this paper, Heath describes data types and needs assessment approaches including advantages and disadvantages of each.

Hershkowitz, M. (1976). Critical issues in educational needs assessment. Educational Planning, 3 (2), 6-15.

An explanation of learner versus administrative needs is provided , as well as an explanation of the use of criticality functions to determine the perceived extent of goal attainment.

Kaufman, R., & English, F. (1979). Needs assessment: Concept and application. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.

The authors explain the general steps for conducting a needs assessment.

Matczynski, T. J., & Rogus, J. (1985). Needs assessment: A means to clarify the goals of secondary schools. NASSP Bulletin, 69 (477), 34-40.

The authors define needs assessment, establish the purpose and importance of conducting needs assessments, and outline steps of the process. They also compare and contrast deductive and inductive approaches to needs assessments.

Melton, R. G. (1977). Applications of needs assessment in the public schools: Three case studies. Educational Technology, 17 (11), 36-41.

Melton describes actual applications of needs assessments at three levels: district, school, and program. Each case study explains the reasons the needs assessment was conducted, the techniques that were used to establish goals and determine current performance, and how the analysis of gaps led to changes. Each case study concludes with a list of lessons that were learned.

Mitchell, B. S., & Gluck, D. (1986). Pyramid project needs assessment: A beginning. Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 9 (3), 209-223.

Mitchell outlines the major reasons to conduct a needs assessment. A description of a case study is provided.

Neill, S. B. (Ed.) (1983). Planning for tomorrow's schools: Problems and solutions: AASA Critical Issues Report. (Report No. EA 016 145). Arlington, VA: AASA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 236 773)

Neill presents a simple outline of how to conduct a needs assessment.

New Jersey State Department of Education. (1983). Local district planning model guidebook. Trenton, NJ: Author.

This guidebook was designed to assist chief school administrators in the development of their objectives and plans of action for schools. The authors present and describe the basic elements of the state mandated planning model. Priorities are identified through a review of "baseline data".

Ohio State Dept. of Ed. (1985). Conducting self-evaluation, minimum standards (Report No. TM 860559). Ohio St. Dept. of Ed., Col. Div. of Elem. and Sec. Ed. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 274 691)

This manual was designated for conducting self-evaluations. It includes an introduction; directions for using the self-evaluation instruments (rationale, preliminary requirements, emphasis on flexibility, organizing the program, reviewing assessment results and validating target needs, and developing a plan of action); and the evaluation instruments used.

Pratt, D. (1980). Curriculum design and development. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Pratt defines needs assessments and their functions. Suggestions are made about appropriate groups from which to gather data as well as methods of gathering data.

Sarthory, J. A. (1977). Needs assessment and the practitioner: Problems and prospects. Educational Technology, 17 (11), 24-36.

The author identifies and describes five major problems associated with the needs assessment process. Problems relate to a lack of expertise and obstacles to using needs assessment results.

South Carolina Dept. of Ed. (1986). An implementation guide for the legislative mandated South Carolina School Improvement Process (Report No. EA 019178). S. C. Dept. of Ed. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. Ed 278 173)

This manual provides a step-by-step process of a school improvement program. Chapter three pertains to needs assessment. The program is based on six indicators of effective schools as found in a review of research.

Stufflebeam, D. L., McCormick, C. M., Brinkerhoff, R. O., & Nelson, C. O. (1985). Conducting educational needs assessment. Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff.

In the introduction the authors state that "the book is likely to be most useful in making one aware of several dimensions of and approaches to needs assessment, and as a resource in planning and identifying the many tasks of a needs assessment study."

Unruh, G. G., & Unruh, A. (1984). Curriculum development: Problems, processes, progress. Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.

The author presents a concise, general examination of needs assessments with some specific applications reviewed. Psychological needs of learners are emphasized.

Witkin, B. R. (1977). Needs assessment: Kits, models, and tools. Educational Technology, 17 (11), 5-18.

The author reviews and briefly describes and compares the salient characteristics of several widely used needs assessment instruments and models.